

The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp

CHAPTER 1

1 Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to Polycarp, bishop of the church which is at Smyrna; their overseer, but rather himself overlooked by God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: all happiness.

2 Having known that thy mind towards God, is fixed as it were upon an immovable rock; I exceedingly give thanks, that I have been thought worthy to behold thy blessed face, in which may I always rejoice in God.

3 Wherefore I beseech thee by the grace of God with which thou art clothed, to press forward in thy course, and to exhort all others that they may be saved.

4 Maintain thy place with all care both of flesh and spirit: Make it thy endeavour to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Bear with all men, even as the Lord with thee.

5 Support all in love, as also thou dost. Pray without ceasing: ask more understanding than what thou already hast. Be watchful, having thy spirit always awake.

6 Speak to every one according as God shall enable thee. Bear the infirmities of all, as a perfect combatant; where the labour is great, the gain is the more.

7 If thou shalt love the good disciples, what thank is it? But rather do thou subject to thee those that are mischievous, in meekness.

8 Every wound is not healed with the same plaster: if the accessions of the disease be vehement, modify them with soft remedies: be in all things wise as a serpent, but harmless as a dove.

9 For this cause thou art composed of flesh and spirit; that thou mayest modify those things that appear before thy face.

10 And as for those that are not seen, pray to God that he would reveal them unto thee, that so thou mayest be wanting in nothing, but mayest abound in every gift.

11 The times demand thee, as the pilots the winds; and he that is tossed in a tempest, the haven where he would be; that thou mayst attain unto God.

12 Be sober as the combatant of God: the crown proposed to thee is immortality, and eternal life; concerning which thou art also fully persuaded. I will be thy surety in all things, and my bonds, which thou hast loved.

13 Let not those that seem worthy of credit, but teach other doctrines, disturb thee. Stand firm and immovable, as an anvil when it is beaten upon.

14 It is the part of a brave combatant to be wounded, and yet overcome. But especially we ought to endure all things for God's sake, that he may bear with us.

15 Be every day better than other: consider the times; and expect him, who is above all time, eternal, invisible, though for our sakes made visible: impalpable, and impassable, yet for us subjected to sufferings; enduring all manner of ways for our salvation.

CHAPTER 2

1 Let not the widows be neglected: be thou after God, their guardian.

2 Let nothing be done without thy knowledge and consent; neither do thou anything but according to the will of God; as also thou dost, with all constancy.

3 Let your assemblies be more full: inquire into all by name.

4 Overlook not the men and maid servants; neither let them be puffed up: but rather let them be the more subject to the glory of God, that they may obtain from him a better liberty.

5 Let them not desire to be set free at the public cost, that they be not slaves to their own lusts.

6 Flee evil arts; or rather, make not any mention of them.

7 Say to my sisters, that they love the Lord; and be satisfied with their own husbands, both in the flesh and spirit.

8 In like manner, exhort my brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ, that they love their wives, even as the Lord the Church.

9 If any man can remain in a virgin state, to the honour of the flesh of Christ, let him remain without boasting; but if he boast, he is undone. And if he desire to be more taken notice of than the bishop he is corrupted.

10 But it becomes all such as are married, whether men or women to come together with the consent of the bishop, that so their marriage may be according to godliness, and not in lust.

11 Let all things be done to the honour of God.

12 Hearken unto the bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul be security for them that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons. And may my portion be together with theirs in God.

13 Labour with one another; contend together, run together, suffer together; sleep together, and rise together; as the stewards, and assessors, and ministers of God.

14 Please him under whom ye war, and from whom ye receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter; but let your baptism remain, as your arms; your faith, as your helmet; your charity, as your spear; your patience, as your whole armour.

15 Let your works be your charge, that so you may receive a suitable reward. Be longsuffering therefore towards each other in meekness: as God is towards you.

16 Let me have joy of you in all things.

CHAPTER 3

1 Now forasmuch as the church of Antioch in Syria, is, as I am told, through your prayers; I also have been the more comforted and without care in God; if so be that by suffering, I shall attain unto God; that through your prayers I may be found a disciple of Christ.

2 It will be very fit, O most worthy Polycarp, to call a select council, and choose some one whom ye particularly love, and who is patient of labour; that he may be the messenger of God; and that going unto Syria, he may glorify your incessant love, to the praise of Christ.

3 A Christian has not the power of himself: but must be always at leisure for God's service. Now this work is both God's and your's: when ye shall have perfected it.

4 For I trust through the grace of God that ye are ready to every good work that is fitting for you in the Lord.

5 Knowing therefore your earnest affection for the truth, I have exhorted you by these short letters.

6 But forasmuch as I have not been able to write to all the churches, because I must suddenly sail from Troas to Neapolis; for so is the command of those to whose pleasure I am subject; do you write to the churches that are near you, as being instructed in the will of God, that they also may do in like manner.

7 Let those that are able send messengers; and let the rest send their letters by those who shall be sent by you: that you may be glorified to all eternity, of which you are worthy.

8 I salute all by name, particularly the wife of Epitropus, with all her house and children. I salute Attalus my well-beloved.

9 I salute him who shall be thought worthy to be sent by you into Syria. Let grace be ever with him, and with Polycarp who sends him.

10 I wish you all happiness in our God, Jesus Christ; in whom continue, in the unity and protection of God.

11 I salute Alce my well-beloved. Farewell in the Lord.